

Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals

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Iowans Urged to Practice Food Safety at Home

DES MOINES, IOWA - Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA) Director Steve Young urges all Iowans to practice the same food safety techniques at home as are used by chefs in Iowa restaurants. ASeptember is National Food Safety Education Month,@Young said, adding: “It’s a time for everyone to remember that safe food preparation and storage practices are just as important in the home as they are in the restaurant kitchen.@This year’s theme, AStore It ... Don’t Ignore It,@focuses on the important procedures necessary for storing food safely.

The national food safety awareness campaign was created by the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Iowa food safety awareness events are sponsored by the Iowa Food Safety Task Force, a coalition of federal, state and local regulatory agencies, state and local health departments, commodity groups, and educational organizations.

AThe major goal of the Task Force is to heighten public awareness about the importance of food safety education, whether you’re cooking for your family at home or for consumers in a major restaurant,@Director Young said. Because the possibility of a foodborne illness is just as likely to begin at home as it is in a restaurant kitchen, the Director urges all Iowans to practice the following safe food storage practices at home:

- Store raw meat, poultry and fish separately from prepared and ready-to-eat food. If these

items cannot be stored separately, store them below prepared or ready-to-eat food. Raw meat, poultry and fish should be stored in the following top-to-bottom order in your refrigerator: whole fish, whole cuts of beef and pork, ground meats and fish, whole and ground poultry.

- All potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat food should be labeled with the date it was prepared or purchased. All food should clearly note the content of the package in which it is stored. If you take food out of its original package, always put it in a clean food container with a tight-fitting lid.
- Never store food near chemicals or cleaning supplies, and keep it out from under stairways and pipes.
- Discard any food that has passed its Use-by date.
- Produce should not be washed prior to storage as moisture may begin to break down the product and promote the growth of bacteria.
- Follow the First in, first out method of stock rotation. Note the contents on each package. Stock your home pantry based upon the Use-by or expiration dates so the older food is used first. Regularly check the expiration dates on cans and packages and discard the food products that have exceeded their expiration date.

During September's National Food Safety Education Month, you have the opportunity to practice safe food handling and storage technique at home, Young continued. When dealing with your family's safety, always remember to **Store It ... Don't Ignore It**